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# Grammar, Linguistics, Communication A New Reference Grammar of English[1]

When, in 1586, William Bullokar published his *Pamphlet for Grammar*, the earliest extant grammar of English written in English, he could not possibly have imagined what mighty wheels his slender volume – a mere 68 pages – had set in motion.[2] More than four hundred years – and grammars – later, by virtue of the unique status of English as today's world language, English grammar has secured a firm position as a worldwide concern, linguistically, pedagogically and, not least, commercially.

Over the past few decades – indeed, throughout the greater part of the twentieth century – English grammars have kept coming at an awesome rate, in a variety of sizes and styles, for a variety of readers, ranging from beginning learners of English to theoretical linguists.[3] Not even those with a keen professional interest in the field find it it easy nowadays to keep abreast of the annual proliferation of English grammars, whether of a purely practical/pedagogical or a theoretical/linguistic orientation. Some works, however, clearly stand out as more worthy of attention than others. One of them is *A User's Grammar of English: Word, Sentence, Text, Interaction* (henceforth *UGE*), published in 1989.

*UGE* is noteworthy in several respects, quantitative as well as qualitative, in comparison with most other grammars published in the last ten years or so. One of them is the sheer size of the book: 959 pages, divided into 955 paragraphs. To be sure, it is dwarfed by the 1,779 large and densely printed pages of Quirk et al.'s monumental *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985; henceforth *CGEL*), not to mention Jespersen's seven-volume classic, *A Modern English Grammar* (1909-49). Still, to the average student and teacher of English, *UGE* will come across as quite a bulky affair.

Another quantitative feature of *UGE* is the number of contributors, or co-authors. Where Jespersen was a lone hand, *CGEL* the crowning achievement of the "Gang of Four", i.e. Quirk et al., after their trial run, *A Gram-*

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[1] This is a review article on René Dirven (ed.), *A User's Grammar of English: Word, Sentence, Text, Interaction.* Compact edition. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989. (Duisburger Arbeiten zur Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft, Band 4)

[2] Actually, according to Bullokar's introductory paragraph, his *Pamphlet* is an abbreviated version of a larger grammar, which, however, has been lost.

[3] A useful bibliography of English grammars is given at the end of the book under review. For discussion of some different types of English grammars, see Rydén (1982). Cf. also Johansson & Lysvåg (1986), pp. 293ff.

*mar of Contemporary English* (1972), *UGE* emerges as the epitome of collective authorship. No fewer than twenty-five authors are involved, predominantly from universities in western and central Europe, excluding Britain, a sign of the continuing internationalization of English grammar as an object of study and research. Some of the contributors have written one chapter each, others – like René Dirven, the heroic editor of this mighty tome – are responsible for several chapters, alone or in collaboration with others; e.g., the chapter on tense and aspect was written by six co-authors. Obviously, such a large-scale collective effort will entail its fair share of organizational problems, as well as "differences in style and presentation", as noted in the Preface (p. IV). Some of them will be exemplified and discussed in due course.

From a qualitative point of view, *UGE* is characterized by "a very wide view of the notion of 'grammar'", deriving from "a concept of grammar which embraces various aspects of communication." Thus, apart from core areas of grammar (Parts A and B), focusing on word-classes, phrase and sentence structure, etc., roughly the last third of the book is devoted to the "structure of texts" (Part C), with chapters on cohesion/coherence, presentation of information and stylistics, as well as to the "structure of interaction" (Part D), where things like pragmatic principles of cooperation, the "social meaning of language" and even nonverbal interaction ("body language") are treated. To give some further idea of the wide range of topics covered by *UGE*, here are some chapter headings not usually found in ordinary grammars: "Idioms" (Ch. Vb), "Semantic Roles" (Ch. X), "Types of Texts" (Ch. XVIII), "The Art of Speaking" (Ch. XIX).

As is readily seen, *UGE* can be said to mirror significant developments and shifts of emphasis in linguistics over the past few decades. Indeed, without such a background the book could never have been written. Grammar as a formal system is consistently related to its role in a semantically and pragmatically – as well as sociolinguistically – oriented perspective of human communication, where things like semantic roles ("Experiencer", "Beneficiary", "Instrument", etc.) and speech acts ("communicative functions" like statements, requests, warnings, etc.) are coupled with structural properties of sentences. This, of course, is also the perspective shared by proponents of communicative language teaching, in itself heavily influenced by ideas stemming from theoretical linguistics. On such a view it is equally natural to break away from the traditional conception of grammar as being synonymous with grammar within the sentence. Consequently, like some other modern grammars, *UGE* pays a great deal of attention to what Johansson & Lysvåg (1986, pp. 198ff) refer to as "grammar beyond the sentence", i.e. to text linguistics/discourse analysis, where "cohesive devices" of different kinds – grammatical and other (e.g., personal pronouns or adverbs like *however*) – play key roles linking sentences in a text. Closely related to this area is that of thematics – the principles governing the way

messages are organized, especially with regard to the presentation of known/given versus new information. Here, too, grammatical devices of various kinds (word order, the use of articles, cleft sentences, etc.) are the instruments by means of which specific communicative purposes are implemented, as emphasized in *UGE*.[4]

I find myself very much in sympathy with this general view of grammar as being at the very heart of the communicative process. Linguistically, of course, such a view, may seem rather self-evident. In a pedagogical context, however, it is extremely important to realize the crucial role of grammar in anything remotely resembling full-fledged human communication, the professed goal of, e.g., English teaching in Swedish schools. The absurd – although, alas, not completely unheard of – notion that grammar is somehow peripheral to "communicative competence" and communicative language teaching may actually derive from an impoverished view of grammar as merely a piece of formal(istic) machinery not really necessary for "making yourself understood". Such attitudes are utterly foreign to the many authors of *UGE*; no grammar, no communication. Becoming aware of what grammar is really all about – to see what it is there for – is thus an important first step, although easily overlooked, in foreign language learning and teaching, preliminary to learning specific forms and structures. It is another matter, known to every teacher, that the road from conscious knowledge to unconscious, automatic command of grammar is usually a long and winding one.

Occasionally, the scope of grammar in *UGE* tends to be so all-inclusive as to obscure the borderline, fuzzy enough in its own right, between grammatical and other (lexical, pragmatic, etc.) components of communication. For example, it is not immediately obvious that the right place for a classification of idioms and other fixed expressions, however interesting (pp. 217ff), is a grammar. The same goes for cooperative principles of interaction along Gricean lines, such as "When appropriate, give reasons and explanations for what you say" (p. 821) or "Reciprocate, and make your partner feel important" (p. 826). In these and other cases the connection with English grammar would seem rather tenuous, if by English grammar we mean the more or less systematic or rule-governed structural features of English.[5] This is not to deny the usefulness of a good deal of the informa-

[4] The first grammar consistently applying a communicative perspective was Leech & Svartvik (1975), in which a functional/semantic "sorting" of grammatical fact was introduced. A similar semantic/communicative approach to English grammar is to be found in Jackson (1990), to some degree also in the *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* (1990), with chapter headings like "Referring to people and things" and "Expressing manner and place", contrasting with the more traditional, structure-based plan of, e.g., Alexander (1988). Cf. also Ljung & Ohlander (1992), which is largely word-class based but with certain functional/communicative features.

[5] Cf., e.g., Sweet (1891, p. 7): "Grammar – like other sciences – deals only with

tion – especially when of a contrastive kind – offered by *UGE* on pragmatic and other aspects of interaction. After all, communication depends on a lot more than just grammar.

In itself, the point just made, concerning the division of labour between grammar and other links in the chain of communication, may not be considered very damning from the point of view of the ordinary user of *UGE* as a reference work. Which brings us to the question: Who is the user of this *User's Grammar of English* supposed to be?

*UGE* itself defines its intended readership as "present or future professional users of English, that is all those who use English as a major tool in their careers" (Preface, p. III). Presumably, this rather sweeping identification subsumes not only linguists, teachers, translators, and advanced students of English, but also people in many other walks of life who use – rather than study – English for many different purposes, commercial, cultural, scientific, etc. Consequently, what many, if not most users of English will need is a reference work satisfying practical needs, such as the answer to the following question: Is it all right to use the word *like* instead of *as* in, e.g., the sentence *Like I informed you last week, the goods cannot be delivered until January 1st*? Accordingly, the "main goal of [*UGE*] is to offer a fully comprehensive description of present-day English in an easily accessible form" (Preface, p. III). This sounds like a pretty tall order; no grammar of English or any other language – not even *CGEL* – can lay claim to being "fully comprehensive". In fact, as we shall see later on, there are things missing from *UGE* that most readers would have expected to find. For the moment, however, let us go on to the question whether the description of English grammar provided in *UGE* is presented "in an easily accessible form". How user-friendly is, say, a teacher or a translator likely to find *UGE*?

The question just posed relates to another of the main purposes of the book. In addition to its practical reference function, *UGE* also aims to give "insight in the nature of the rules and principles underlying the structure and use of English words, phrases, sentences, texts and interaction" (Preface, p. III).[6]

Thus, what *UGE* attempts is a harmonious blend between, in the words of Henry Sweet (1891, pp. 1, 4), grammar as the "art of language", i.e. practical grammar, and grammar as the "science of language", i.e. theoreti-

what can be brought under **general laws** and stated in the form of general rules, and ignores **isolated** phenomena." In pedagogical grammars, e.g. ordinary school grammars, this strict notion of grammar – as opposed to lexical facts – is not usually adhered to.

[6] Cf. Johansson & Lysvåg (1986): "For a university student grammar should not just be a tool in the learning of the language. It should give insight into the working of the language."

cal grammar.[7] It is intended to be a great deal more than merely a practical handbook of English grammar. Its outlook throughout is consistently linguistic, not surprising in view of its many specialist contributors. Its mode of presentation, where argumentation and explanation concerning classifications, distinctions and criteria play a prominent part, has a distinctly linguistic flavour to it. This, of course, is also one of the reasons for its size; argumentation and explanation are space-consuming activities.

In my view, *UGE* is considerably more successful in its theoretical aspirations than in its practical reference function. For linguistically inclined readers it makes, for the most part, far more stimulating reading than that offered by most grammatical handbooks, within an eclectic theoretical framework of basically the same kind as that employed by the influential *CGEL*. However, striking a proper balance between theoretical/linguistic and practical/pedagogical aims is not an easy job. Clearly, not all "professional users of English" take an interest in linguistic grammar. Such readers, intent on finding practical information quickly, will find parts of *UGE* pretty heavy going, requiring a level of linguistic background knowledge and awareness that, I strongly suspect, is lacking in a great many professional users of English. To such readers, having to plod through a linguistic discussion before finding the desired information will not be a bonus.

Still, the linguistic perspective is what sets *UGE* apart from most other English grammars, for better or for worse, depending on one's outlook. In any event, I very much doubt that readers looking primarily for a practical grammatical handbook will find *UGE* sufficiently user-friendly. To my mind, the book should more aptly have been adressed to the professional *student* – rather than "user" – of English. Its proper role is quite clearly in an academic context.

Even a cursory look at the index will confirm the impression that *UGE* has a pronounced linguistic orientation, despite the attempt at a disclaimer in the Preface (p. III), where it is stated that "UGE tries to overcome [the obstacle of technical linguistic terminology] by reducing the number of technical terms as much as possible...." Apart from the usual array of more or less traditional terms, the index contains a substantial amount of non-traditional linguistic terminology, reflecting the wide scope of *UGE*, e.g. terms like "irreversible trinomials", "phatic function", "right dislocation", "presupposition", "epistemic modals", "pseudo-cleft sentence", "exophoric reference", etc. My point is not that these and many other terms of the same calibre are unnecessary; in their respective linguistic contexts, they are just as common and necessary as more traditional terms. However, to readers chiefly interested in *UGE* as an up-to-date reference work, they may appear somewhat forbidding, especially since the index contains comparatively few individual "grammatical" words of the kind that would pro-

[7] For some discussion of the relationship between practical and theoretical grammar in a pedagogical perspective, see Ohlander (1980-81).

vide easy access, at a very concrete level, to well-known problem areas of English grammar. For example, neither *it* nor *there* is included; *some* is there, but not *any*; *should* is represented in its own right, *would* only as part of the collocations *would better*, *would like* to and *would rather*. Among individual function words, only prepositions seem to have been included more or less consistently. On the whole, however, coverage of strategic individual words is surprisingly unsystematic and unpredictable, especially for a grammar intended to serve as a reference work. As it is, using the index – and thus the grammar – for practical purposes presupposes substantial terminological, i.e. theoretical, knowledge on the part of the reader. Actually, not even that will always help. An example will show what I mean.

Let us briefly return to the the sentence *Like I informed you last week, ...*, assuming that I want to find out whether it is acceptable to use *like* in this kind of context. As a first step I consult the index of *UGE*, looking for the word *like*. No luck. I then try the word *as*. I find a reference, but only to *as* in a relative function (*It was such a day as we seldom see in Hamburg*). Not really what I was looking for. What to do next? Well, since I happen to know a bit of grammar, i.e. that *like* functions as – or is it like? – a conjunction in the sentence that sparked my curiosity, perhaps the word "conjunction" – or, even better, "comparative conjunction" in the index could lead on to something of interest. Tough luck again – no sign of conjunctions in the index, which means I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Back at square one, close to despair but with plenty of time, I start leafing through one chapter after another, in the firm belief that, surely, there must be something about my particular problem somewhere in this large volume. On page 466, in the chapter called "Semantic Roles", my patience is at last rewarded. There, in a paragraph dealing with different expressions of "manner", I get the following information: "The conjunction used with manner clauses, which also include clauses of comparison [not in the index S.O.], is *as*. In informal speech, *like* is also used as a conjunction: *Do as I tell you* (careful speech) - *Do like I tell you* (informal speech)."[8] In this case, which is far from unique, all is definitely not well that ends well. This kind of wild-goose chase is the very opposite of the ease of access that is imperative in a reference work where "the user can quickly locate the information required" (Preface, p. III).

The trouble with the index, then, is that not only does it lack a large number of individual function words, such as *like*; quite a few higher-level, central terms are missing as well. Another case in point is "concord", "agreement" or, more specifically, "subject-verb agreement". Examples could easily be multiplied.

Apart from the index, which must be assigned a particularly strategic role in a work of this kind, there are organizational problems at least partly

[8] Cf. also p. 922, where it is stated that *like* "is frequently used by standard English speakers, although it is rejected by purists."

deriving from the unprecedented degree of collective authorship that is such a prominent feature of *UGE*. Since, as already noted, the reader is frequently let down by the index, he will have to rely, to a very large extent, on the clarity and transparency of the book's overall organization (e.g. chapter headings) to be able to find his way around. Otherwise (cf the case of *like*, discussed above), it will be difficult to know where to find the relevant information. Here, too, *UGE* frequently comes out as rather less than user-friendly, as some examples will demonstrate.

The first main part of *UGE* deals with "the structure of words and phrases", one chapter each, written by different authors, being devoted to, respectively, "Verbs and Verb Phrases", "Nouns and Noun Phrases", "Adjectives and Adjective Phrases", and "Adverbs and Adverb Phrases". These chapters, considered in relation to each other, suffer from a lack of uniformity, with regard to both content and presentation, that many readers will find disturbing. For example, despite their chapter headings (see above), the verb (phrase) and adjective (phrase) chapters do not even mention the terms "verb phrase" and "adjective phrase", as opposed to the other two chapters, where the terms "noun phrase" and "adverb phrase" are explained and exemplified (pp. 56, 145).[9] Further, contrary to the reader's expectations, these four chapters have very little to say about the internal structure of the phrase types in question; the focus is almost exclusively on the word-classes in question, i.e. on different types of verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, the corresponding phrase types being largely ignored.

This means, for example, that in the noun (phrase) chapter the definite and indefinite articles are mentioned only in passing, further discussion being postponed to Ch. IXa ("Reference: Determiners and Pronouns"), a couple of hundred pages later on. Given *UGE*'s cyclical organization, it is easy to see the theoretical rationale behind this, but the question remains whether it is a practical sort of arrangement for readers not already in the know. In many other cases as well, the reader will have to look in many different places to find the desired information . To be sure, the editor, who must have faced a truly Herculean task, cannot be blamed for all such problems. Rather, they should be looked upon as symptomatic of the inevitable clash between a linguistic and a more "practical", down-to-earth perspective, where accessibility and transparency are vital. Still, more tightly structured, *UGE* would have been easier to read for both theoretically and practically inclined readers.

A further cause of uncertainty on the part of the reader is that, not infrequently, what should be regarded as syntactic information is presented in the word-class chapters. For example, transformational processes like "extraposition" (e.g. *To find the answer was easy* → *It was easy to find the answer*), "object raising" (e.g. *To find the answer was easy* → *The answer was easy to find*), and "subject raising" (e.g. *That Abigail will succed is likely* → *Abigail is likely to succeed*), all prime examples of syntactic phenomena, are presented in the adjective chapter (pp. 132ff) in Part A ("The Structure of Words and Phrases"), whereas it would more properly belong in Part B ("The Structure of Sentences"). Incidentally, this is also the only reference to extraposition given in the index, which may well create the erroneous impression that extraposition is restricted to cases involving adjectives. In fact, as is well known, this is only one exponent of a more general process (cf, e.g., *That Gwendolyn left is **a fact*** → *It is **a fact** that Gwendolyn left*), which should thus be treated in a wider, more unified syntactic context than in a chapter on adjectives.

A somewhat more pedestrian but nonetheless troublesome area of English grammar concerns the distinction *some - any*. Here, too, the reader may well expect a unified treatment. Instead, discussion of *some* and *any* is split up on two different chapters (Ch. VI and Ch. IXa), without any indication of this in the index (cf. above). Actually, indefinite pronouns at large are given unduly short shrift in *UGE*. In the sections on pronouns (pp. 377ff) there is nothing like a systematic treatment of words belonging to the series ending in *-body*, *-one*, *-thing* (e.g., *somebody, anyone, everything, nobody*). Another gap of a similar kind relates to the distinction between interrogative *what* and *which*. As far as I have been able to find out – neither word is included in the index – nothing is said about the basic semantic factors underlying the difference in usage between these pronouns in the places where they are mentioned (pp. 257f, 504f).

In a reference grammar such gaps are peculiar, even embarrassing. Possibly, the reason for them is not only to be found in the large number of contributors, inevitably giving rise to certain logistic problems, resulting in occasional lack of coordination. It may also be the case that the overall communicative perspective of *UGE*, with its emphasis on functional aspects (semantic, pragmatic and others), will occasionally clash with the requirement of clarity, systematicity and transparency with regard to the description of the grammatical system as such. There may actually be a descriptive dilemma here, resulting from the dual perspective of English grammar – formal/structural and functional/communicative – adopted in *UGE*. A purely formal/structural sorting of the grammatical facts, as in most traditional grammars, will yield a partially different angle of English grammar than a sorting guided by the functional/communicative properties of the grammatical forms and structures, where, owing to the difference in focus, certain structural features may more easily slip through the net. That this can be a very real dilemma is , I think, evident in parts of *UGE*. Whether it is also a necessary dilemma is perhaps not equally clear. It is, however, a question that deserves some more attention than it has always received. After all, grammar concerns the interplay of formal/structural and functional/communicative aspects of language, both of equal importance.

[9] Verb phrases and adjective phrases are briefly touched on in the introduction to basic grammatical terminology, pp. 7 and 12, respectively.

This also means that without a good command of the forms and structures of a language, the prospects of communicative competence, in any non-vacuous sense of the term, in a language will remain dim. This in itself may be construed as an argument – also in a pedagogical communicative perspective – for promoting an overall grasp and awareness of the formal/structural potential of a language. Basically, this is what pedagogical grammar and grammar teaching are – or should be – about, i.e. providing a maximally lucid view of grammar as a more or less predictable system, constituting one of the cornerstones of verbal communication.[10]

Let us now leave the general problems given rise to by the overall perspective and organization of *UGE*. And, lest we forget, there are certainly not only problems but also, as already pointed out, a lot of discussions, arguments and analyses that make for rewarding reading, especially where systematic attempts are made to explore the connection between grammar and semantics. Inevitably, though, there are things that a reviewer may find debatable in the specific analyses, formulations and examples offered. Only a few of them can be brought up here.

In the introductory paragraph on phrases and phrase categories (pp. 11f), the phrase *the day before yesterday* is classified as an adverb phrase, with *yesterday* as head, premodified by *the day before*. This can hardly be correct. Instead, the whole phrase must be analysed as a noun phrase, with the noun *day* as its head, postmodified by the prepositional phrase *before yesterday*, i.e. as having basically the same structure as, e.g., *the hour before dawn* or *the man in the street*. The fact that the phrase in question can function as an adverbial, as in *Miss Piggy arrived the day before yesterday* is of course not relevant to the question of phrase category; noun phrases as adverbials are also exemplified in *UGE* (pp. 578f).

The chapter on adverbials (Ch. XIII) opens with a discussion of the relationship between the terms "adverbial" and "adjunct" (adverbials expressing things like time, place and manner). It is stated (p. 578) that "The term *adverbials* will be limited here to refer to [forms] functioning as an adjunct in the sentence" (e.g., *I met him **last Sunday***). On the very same page, however, the term "adverbial" is also applied to sentence adverbials of different kinds, more specifically to "disjuncts" (expressing the speaker's attitude, e.g. *Fortunately, Strangely enough*) and "conjuncts" (linking sentences together, e.g. *However, To sum up*). To the attentive reader, such contradictory signals do not help to clarify the rather tangled terminological relations between different types of adverbials in English.

Despite the length of *UGE*, some grammatical areas – apart from the gaps already discussed – would have merited some further illumination. For

[10] Cf. Leech & Svartvik (1975, p. 13): "we need to know both the communicative choices offered by grammar..., and also the structural grammatical choices through which communication must be channelled....The two sets of choices are, however, largely independent, and so are best dealt with separately."

instance, in the otherwise very meaty sections on genitive constructions, there is hardly any mention of the main tendencies concerning the use of the *s*-genitive versus the *of*-construction (*the girl's ball* versus *the roof of the house*). Nor do we get any stylistic information relating to the admissibility of both types of construction in cases like *the car's wheels* and *the wheels of the car*, where the former construction is typically to be found in the written language, especially in newspapers and magazines. In many other cases, similar stylistic information is given (cf. also below).

As regards the examples given in UGE, they are as a rule well chosen, often with a ring of authenticity. Among the rare exceptions, there are the following. The noun *bread* is used in the plural in the sentence *Where did you buy these breads? (=loaves of bread)* (p. 81). Surely, this use of *bread* as a countable noun is so rare as to be considered unacceptable by the vast majority of Standard English speakers. An equally low acceptability rating would most likely be accorded the use of *no one* - instead of the expected *none* or *not one* - in the phrase *no one of the soldiers* (p. 391).

The excellent survey of sociolinguistic aspects of English (Ch. XXIII) rightly stresses the importance of being able to recognize linguistic variation and its social backgrounds and implications; such knowledge, or awareness, is clearly an essential ingredient in a person's communicative ability, to which both knowledge *of* and knowledge *about* a language contribute. In this chapter, specifically devoted to variation and attitudes towards it, the following words of advice are offered (p. 922): "In general, learners of English may be advised to follow the usage of standard English speakers, and to ignore the views of purists.", i.e. the die-hards who, mysteriously, still insist that, among many other things, it is not really proper English to end a sentence with a preposition, as in *What are you talking about?* (instead of *About what are you talking?*). Strangely enough, such advice in the seemingly eternal tug-of-war between usage and (prescriptive) grammar is still needed, more than a hundred years after Sweet's somewhat provocative statement (1891, p. 5) that "whatever is in general use in a language is for that very reason grammatically correct."

Information about usage variation is not only given in the sociolinguistic chapter of *UGE* but in many other places as well, mostly relating to the stylistic and geographical dimensions (formal - informal, British English - American English). For example, we are told (p. 76) that in American but not in British English it is possible to use, among other nouns ending in -*s*, the form *scissors* as a singular noun: *This scissors is blunt; I need another one*. It might have been added that this American usage is rather informal. Another difference – a fairly well-known one – concerns collective nouns like *team* or *committee*: "American English heavily favours the use of a singular verb with these collectives. They are, however, very often referred to with a plural pronoun, e.g. *The committee is discussing the proposal. They are divided as to how to vote*" (p. 63).

One usage note deals with the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives. It is pointed out (p.119) that, when only two entities are compared, "in informal English the superlative is often used as well [as the comparative]...", as in *She was the youngest of the two daughters* (where the form *younger* would be the preferred one in a formal context). In this connection, it could also have been mentioned (p. 121) that the irregular forms of *old*, i.e. *elder* and *eldest*, are rarely used in American English. Likewise, in the very readable section on the distinction between the simple past tense and the present perfect (pp. 334ff), there is no mention of the difference between British English and American English use of these tenses, e.g. in connection with the adverbs *yet* and *already*: *Have you met him yet* (BrE) - *Did you meet him yet* (AmE), *I've already met him* (BrE) - *I already met him* (AmE). It is, of course, largely a matter of opinion what to include in a grammar when it comes to geographical, social and stylistic variation. However, in such an extensive work as *UGE* – as opposed to most school grammars – the reader would have been well served with more systematic inclusion of notes and observations of the kinds exemplified above.

In recent years, one of the most talked-about sociolinguistic aspects of language concerns sexism, a subject of more heated discussion in English-speaking countries like Britain and the U.S. than in, e.g., Sweden. In the sociolinguistic chapter of *UGE*, the choice of personal pronoun when referring generically to, e.g., "the reader" or "the teacher", is brought up. The relative clumsiness, for lack of a neutral generic pronoun (like Finnish *hän* '(s)he'), of *he or she*, *his and her*, etc., is highlighted by the the following parting shot (p. 927): "The reader may, of course, follow his or her own ideas, if he or she so wishes."[11]

On the whole, *UGE* itself does not lay itself bare to accusations of any obvious sexist bias with regard to its examples, with the possible exception of the following pair of sentences (p. 862), inviting different interpretations: *He didn't marry her because she was ugly - He didn't marry her because she was beautiful (but because she was rich)*. Sexist or not, these sentences, exemplifying differences as regards "scope of negation" (What is really negated in each sentence?), provide a good illustration of how our "knowledge of the world" influences our semantic as well as grammatical interpretation of a sentence, signalled by differences in intonation. In other words, it can be seen as an especially clear example of the interdependence between the semantic/pragmatic, syntactic and phonological levels of language, thus also of *UGE*'s view of grammar as an integral part of a wider

[11]For hilarious exemplification and discussion of what some people, especially in the U.S., brand as sexist , racist, ageist, "ableist", "speciesist", etc. , language - inclusive of recommendations as to more "politically correct" usage - see Beard & Cerf (1992), dedicated to "the former Donna Ellen Cooperman, who, after a courageous yearlong battle through the New York State court system, won the right to be known as Donna Ellen Cooperperson."

communicative context.

It is time to sum up. In *The Philosophy of Grammar* (1924, pp. 39f), Otto Jespersen emphasizes that grammatical description may proceed in two different directions, depending on one's point of departure: "we may start either from without or from within", i.e "we may take a form as given and then inquire into its meaning or function; [or we may] invert the process and take the meaning or function and ask how that is expressed in form." Jespersen concludes: "The facts of grammar are the same..., only the point of view being different: the treatment is different, and the two [types of description] supplement each other and together give a complete and perspicuous survey of the general facts of a language." This, it seems to me, is basically what *UGE* has attempted to achieve in combining a formal/structural view of grammar with a semantic/functional perspective, with communication in a wide sense as its organizing principle.

As will have appeared, I do not consider *UGE* wholly successful in its attempt at blending the two perspectives; despite making linguistically worthwhile reading, with interesting discussions and acute observations, it does not really provide the "perspicuous survey" of English grammar that Jespersen had in mind and that practically inclined readers will expect from a reference work. As already argued, there may be several reasons for this, apart from organizational problems due to the large number of authors involved. One possible reason is the difficulty of integrating, in an orderly and lucid fashion, the formal/structural and the functional/communicative perspective within, say, the same section or chapter where a certain phenomenon is brought up; Jespersen talks about different "parts" of a grammar, rather than tackling everything in one fell swoop (cf. also note 10). Another dilemma, having more to do with presentation than with description, is that between theoretical/linguistic and practical/pedagogical grammar. As I have emphasized, I am, generally speaking, in agreement with the linguistic aims of *UGE*, although not always with the way they have been implemented and combined with the more practical goals of the book.

Without some kind of linguistic framework or grounding (which does not have to be very technical), grammar – at whatever level – will always run the risk of lapsing into triviality or incomprehensibility. The lack of an adequate linguistic outlook on grammar in relation to communication, rather than the inherent difficulty of the subject in terms of level of abstraction, is probably what has given grammar and grammar teaching a bad name in many quarters, occasionally even among language teachers.[12] In this respect *UGE*, as well as other works written in the same spirit, may serve as an antidote, stressing the fundamental role of grammar in the communicative

[12]The overly apologetic, or even defeatist, attitude towards grammatical terms conveyed by some – though by no means all – language teachers, usually on the grounds of the purported "abstractness" of grammatical notions, is unlikely to cut much ice with, e.g., teachers within the natural sciences. The level of abstraction in, say, a

process and, at its best, conveying a vivid sense of the complexity and sub-
tlety of English and of human language at large. Thus its overall conception
of grammar promotes a general awareness of language, an important but of-
ten neglected aspect of language teaching, not least in Sweden, where the
concept is hardly ever mentioned in discussions concerning the learning
and teaching of languages.[13]

English grammar has changed in many ways since Bullokar's days. So
have English grammars. As exemplified by *UGE*, new views on language
will open up new and richer vistas on grammar. However, as also evi-
denced by *UGE*, finding the right format for describing and presenting
grammar in a new light is not easy; nor is steering a middle course between
theoretical and practical grammar. For these and other reasons, the flow of
English grammars is likely to continue unabated for years to come. Writing
grammars is a never-ending story.

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school grammar of English, is certainly quite modest in comparison with that in
subjects like mathematics, physics or chemistry, where the use of technical terms
has always, and rightly so, been taken for granted as a conceptual and practical ne-
cessity.

[13] Part of the reason for this lack of interest is probably the oft-repeated slogan,
catching on in the sixties and still but rarely challenged, that knowledge *about* a lan-
guage is a poor substitute for knowledge *of* a language, which is true but largely ir-
relevant: no one questions language proficiency/communicative ability as the over-
riding goal of foreign-language teaching. For an introduction to the role of "aware-
ness of language" in language teaching, see Hawkins (1987). For further discussion
of "language awareness" (LA) and the "Language Awareness Movement" in Brit-
ain, see also James & Garrett (1991). For discussion of grammar (teaching) in rela-
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## CURRENT RESEARCH

**Linguistic research in progress at the Department of English, University of
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Doctoral theses nearing completion:

Christer Geisler, *Relative infinitives in English*
Christine Johansson, *The possessive relatives 'whose' and 'of which' in present-
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Contracted forms in written English
Oral proficiency tests in English
Terms of address in Restoration drama
Terms of sicknesses in Shakespeare: textual and contextual aspects
Subordinate clauses in 16th century English
Words for 'watercourse' and related matters in Old and Middle English
English place-names in *stow*
Further information can be obtained from Professor Mats Rydén, Department of
English, University of Uppsala, Box 513, S-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden.

**New English language thesis from Gothenburg**
In Gothenburg, Jennifer Herriman has recently defended her thesis, *The Indirect
Object in Present-Day English*. The study is clause-based and exclusively syntac-
tic; the criteria used to define an indirect object include the possibility of conver-
sion into a prep-paraphrase and deletability. The definition having been estab-
lished, the usage of indirect objects was examined in the Brown and LOB corpora
and then the various indirect objects were categorized into classes according to
variations in their behaviour.

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